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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 001406

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DEPT FOR EUR A/S FRIED
OSD FOR DASD MCDUGALL
OBO FOR GENERAL WILLIAMS

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ALIYEV REVIEWS DEFENSE ISSUES, REAFFIRMS
SUPPORT FOR NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse per 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a September 15 meeting with the Ambassador and visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James MacDougall, President Aliyev affirmed his commitment to a strong bilateral relationship. Aliyev emphasized that the key points of cooperation "particularly the energy sphere, counterterrorism, and regional stability," increasingly are "intertwined." MacDougall briefed Aliyev on US maritime security efforts in the Caspian Sea and informed Aliyev that DoD was exploring options for a possible train and equip mission in Azerbaijan. Aliyev seemed pleased by both points.

MacDougall encouraged Azerbaijan to explore ways to cooperate with Kazakhstan, especially on maritime security issues. While Aliyev agreed that this was a good idea, he cautioned that Kazakhstan moves slowly to avoid offending other regional states. Aliyev noted to the Ambassador that he is personally engaged on USG efforts to obtain a new Embassy compound. End summary.

12. (C) President Aliyev met with the Ambassador and visiting Department of Defense Deputy Assistant Secretary James MacDougall for 30 minutes on September 15. Welcoming MacDougall, President Aliyev described the bilateral relationship as "fruitful and friendly," stating that he was "very satisfied with the level of cooperation," and considers the US a "close ally." Aliyev underscored that the areas of bilateral cooperation are "intertwined." For example, joint interests in the "energy sphere, counterterrorism, and regional stability" are closely interrelated. Characterizing the level of bilateral cooperation as "wide and important," Aliyev remarked that both countries, efforts could span from the Caspian to the Black Sea. Aliyev referred to the Caspian, Central Asia, and Black Sea as "one big region," where the US role is instrumental. Focusing on regional security, Aliyev noted that at this stage of development and considering the importance of "our southern partner," cooperation and coordination between the US and Azerbaijan is very important. Given the significance of USG-GOAJ cooperation in producing large achievements in the energy sector, our cooperation is also important in the field of security, particularly as the Caspian becomes a more significant and dangerous region. Aliyev then reviewed Azerbaijan's contributions to the GWOT, which he described as "very important for the preservation of peace in the world." MacDougall thanked Aliyev for Azerbaijan's support in the GWOT, and remarked that his successful visit to the US opened an opportunity to elevate the bilateral relationship to a new

level.

CASPIAN SECURITY ASSISTANCE REMAINS STEADY

13. (C) Following up on President Aliyev's questions about US security assistance in the Caspian Sea (made during Aliyev's April 2006 meeting with SECDEF), MacDougall reviewed the major completed and ongoing maritime security programs. MacDougall noted that the USG programs aim to bolster Azerbaijan's maritime capabilities to address proliferation, terrorism, and narcotics threats. Aliyev appeared to understand the message that DoD Caspian assistance increasingly will focus on infrastructure improvements, rather than training. Aliyev attentively listened to the briefing and nodded, suggesting he was pleased with the scope of US security assistance.

14. (C) Noting the US interest in developing stronger ties between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, MacDougall suggested that it was natural for the two states to explore areas of cooperation. MacDougall highlighted maritime security issues as a potential point of cooperation. MacDougall said that the US has focused on developing both states' naval capabilities and that this could be the springboard for Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan sharing threat-related information.

Aliyev was receptive to cooperation with Kazakhstan and saw "no disadvantages in working closer with Kazakhstan." However, he cautioned that Kazakhstan moves slowly to avoid offending other regional states. Highlighting Azerbaijan's approach to regional initiatives, Aliyev remarked that "Azerbaijan is always an initiator" and that we should explore how Kazakhstan can become more involved in Caspian security.

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TRAIN AND EQUIP PROGRAM A POSSIBILITY

15. (C) MacDougall also briefed Aliyev on the potential for a train and equip program for Azerbaijan, noting that Aliyev had raised this request during his April visit to Washington.

MacDougall said the Department of Defense would work with the Ministry of Defense to explore options for a future plan.

Aliyev appeared pleased, while recognizing MacDougall's point that US domestic political dynamics make it challenging to plan this type of program.

ALIYEV PERSONALLY ENGAGED ON NEC SEARCH

16. (C) Aliyev asked the Ambassador for an update on USG efforts to obtain a new Embassy compound, noting that he had put the issue under his "personal supervision." The Ambassador thanked Aliyev for his personal involvement and continued support. Aliyev asked if there was anything more that Azerbaijan could do to assist at this point. The Ambassador explained that as a next step, a US inspection team will arrive at Post during the week of September 25 to evaluate the three properties offered to the USG by the State Property Commission.

17. (U) DASD MacDougall cleared this message.

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